



**2021 National Young Members'
Conference**

Decisions

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Motions

1.. **Right to Disconnect: The Negative Impact of Remote Digital Work on Young Members' Well-Being during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Carried

This Conference denounces the negative impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on young workers' wellbeing and work/life balance, specifically with regard to the Right to Disconnect.

This Conference notes that the Right to Disconnect is the ability to not engage in work-related electronic communications such as e-mails or messages during non-work hours.

The Conference notes that, according to a survey conducted in July 2021 by the South West Young Members Forum, the majority of respondents find it hard to switch off (57%), work over their contracted hours (66%) and continue to work despite not feeling well (83%).

The Conference believes that urgent action is needed to safeguard Young Members' wellbeing.

Therefore, this Conference:

- instructs the National Young Members Forum (NYMF) to campaign and raise the impact of the Right to Disconnect on wellbeing amongst all union branches.
- encourages the NYMF to work with the TUC Young Workers' Forum on the Right to Disconnect.
- asks the NYMF to call on the NEC to encourage branches to campaign directly with employers to produce clear guidelines on the Right to Disconnect.
- asks the NYMF to call on the NEC to lobby the government over the introduction of a Right to Disconnect Bill.

2.. **Young workers, burnout, and mentally healthy workplaces**

Carried as Amended: 2.1

Conference notes that even before the pandemic mental health and stress at work were among the leading issues raised by young workers.

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Conference notes that the pandemic has only exacerbated young workers' concerns about mental health, whether that is due to working in stressful conditions on the front line, or due to isolation from friends, family and support networks.

Conference notes the November 2020 report by The National Centre for Social Research (NatCen) which linked mental health problems with insecure work contracts, and the following report in July 2021 which identified higher levels of mental distress to working from home during the pandemic.

Conference believes that mental health is a workplace issue which must be addressed by trade unions in negotiations with employers and by direct support for affected workers.

Conference asks the National Young Members' Forum (NYMF) to:

1. Develop a campaign around the issues of stress, mental health, burnout, and mentally healthy workplaces, and for the 'right to switch off';
2. Survey young workers on their experiences during the pandemic;
3. Promote UNISON's updated mental health bargaining advice to young workers;
4. Promote the support offered by There For You more widely to young members;
5. Work with Regional Young Members' Forums to share successes in campaigning around mental health issues and to promote UNISON's work on mental health to young members.

3.. Mental Health, Homelessness and LGBT+ Young People

Carried as Amended: 3.1

Conference notes that in the past two years through a confluence of multiple crises including a global pandemic, a massive shift in the economy, and rising unjust violence against the Black Community, that Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Plus (LGBT+) young people everywhere faced issues that changed their lives. Unfortunately, we've seen these issues negatively impact their mental health and that has seen an increase in homelessness.

Conference notes the Albert Kennedy Trust (AKT) LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer plus) youth homelessness report (2021). This report, highlights research that centres the voices and experiences of LGBT+ young people who have faced any form of homelessness in the last five years.

Some of the findings include:

- Almost two thirds of LGBTQ+ young people who responded felt frightened or threatened by their family members before they became homeless. One in five experienced this from romantic partners.

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- Half of LGBTQ+ young people who responded said they feared that expressing their LGBTQ+ identity to family members would lead to them being evicted. Almost one in ten said the same about romantic partners.
- Two thirds of LGBTQ+ young people said homelessness made it hard for them to establish or maintain new relationships, including friendships.
- Almost one fifth of LGBTQ+ young people felt like they had to have casual sex to find somewhere to stay while they were homeless.
- Less than half of LGBTQ+ young people were aware of housing support services the last time they experienced homelessness. Almost one quarter weren't aware of any support services available to them.
- Over half of LGBTQ+ young people have faced some form of discrimination or harassment while accessing services.

AKT also found that almost a quarter of homeless people aged between 16 and 25 identify as LGBT+, and more than three quarters of those people believe coming out to their parents was the main factor.

Conference further notes that the LGBT+ charity Just Like Us reported in February 2021, that LGBT+ young people are twice as likely to feel lonely and more than twice as likely to worry for their mental health on a daily basis during the pandemic than their non-LGBT+ peers.

The process of figuring out your sexuality is stressful; never mind the pressure of hiding it, worrying about how your friends or parents will react and worrying that someone will figure it out. This is the reality of life for countless LGBT+ young people.

Conference therefore calls on the National Young Members Committee to

- A) Work to raise awareness of homelessness amongst Young LGBT+ members and the impact on mental health;
- B. Work with the National LGBT+ Committee to raise wider awareness of the effects of homelessness on Young LGBT+ members;
- C. Encourage branch and regional young member's groups to consider action on homelessness for Young Members' with an emphasis on those who are LGBT+.
- D. Promote LGBT+ charities that offer Mental health support for LGBT+ young people

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4.. A Focus on Apprentices

Carried

In 2019/20, there were 719,000 people participating in an apprenticeship in England, with 322,500 apprenticeship starts and 146,900 apprenticeship achievements.

The NHS alone currently has 14,000 apprentices.

In spite of these high numbers, union membership amongst apprentices remains very low

There is often a great misunderstanding of apprentices. A common assumption is that apprentices are all of college age

Apprentices are often poorly paid, with a much lower minimum wage set for them. Apprentices are open to being treated as cheap labour by an employer and reports of bullying, abuse and harassment are not uncommon. Apprentices are not always made aware of their rights at work.

There is often a great misunderstanding of apprenticeships. A common assumption is that apprentices are all of college age yet just only half of apprentices are aged under 25.

Apprenticeships are a great way for people to enter the workforce and apprentices should get the respect and recognition that they deserve.

Conference asks the National Young Members Forum (NYMF) to call on UNISON's National Executive Committee (NEC) to put the recruitment and activist development of apprentices as a UNISON priority. We also ask for the NYMF to develop a campaign around improving the pay and strengthening the rights of apprentices.

By focusing on these actions, the trade union movement will be stronger and the rights of workers better respected.

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5.. Young workers and quality job: development and progression

Carried

Conference notes the shocking figures reported in April 2021 showing that of those who lost their jobs during the pandemic, almost 80% were aged under 35.

Conference further notes the July 2020 study by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) which found that “the COVID-19 pandemic has severely dented the career prospects of young people and threatens to have a prolonged negative economic impact on them as a result”.

Conference believes that young workers must not pay the price for the pandemic and that fighting to preserve high quality jobs with training and progression accessible to young workers must be a priority during the recovery from the pandemic.

Conference asks the National Young Members' Forum (NYMF) to:

1. Work with UNISON's Service Groups to support and promote bargaining over quality apprenticeships, training programmes, and internal development schemes;
2. Work with UNISON's Learning and Organising Services (LAOS) to promote UNISON's own resources for young workers seeking development and promotion;
3. Work with Regional Young Members' Forums to promote the UNISON Young Workers Charter and encourage employers to sign up to it.

6.. Climate change and young LGBT+ members

Carried as Amended: 6.1

We are at a defining moment when it comes to climate change. Its impacts are global in scope and unparalleled. Climate change will affect every one of us on the planet, but its effects will not be the same for all.

Greta Thunberg's school strikes and climate strikes supported by the Trade Union movement are seen as major reasons why the issue is still alive. There is a tendency to present the use and development of green technologies as a miracle solution. It is not just climate change that we are dealing with, but climate change in an unequal and unjust world. Without equality and equity, we cannot effectively fight climate change.

The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Plus (LGBT+) community is fighting to gain equal rights, and for a just and fair society. In the same way, there is a community of environmentalists, activists and specialists fighting to combat climate change, much of which involves moving towards a just and fair society.

History tells us that diminishing resources are a driver for discrimination. Climate change is a catalyst that will enable those with resources and power to further marginalise any out groups that don't conform. This is based on the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Those already most vulnerable

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and marginalised will experience the greatest impacts. The IPCC identifies LGBT+ communities as a hidden victim of climate change, because of its social vulnerability.

The vulnerability of LGBT+ people to climate change is worsened by poverty and discrimination. It is often difficult for LGBT+ people to access services, particularly in countries which criminalise same sex relationships and where discrimination against trans people is widespread. Around the world LGBT+ people, especially young LGBT+ people, are vulnerable to homelessness as they are often forced to leave their homes due to conflict with the family, violence or abuse. The precarious economic and physical conditions of homeless persons can lead individuals to choose sex work so that they can meet their basic needs, often despite the risk of criminal prosecution. In climate related emergencies it is likely that young LGBT+ people will face discrimination in emergency provision such as shelters.

There is now a general recognition that you can hardly fight the most prominent environmental threat to humanity while ignoring issues of equality and social justice.

Climate change will affect everyone, and it may not seem helpful to some to divide the climate fight into smaller struggles. We cannot hope to provide a solution that works for everyone without recognising the specific impacts climate change will have on different communities.

Conference therefore calls on the National Young Member's Committee to

- A. Work to raise awareness of climate change amongst Young LGBT+ members and its impacts on marginalised communities;
- B. Work with the International Section to raise wider awareness of the adverse effects of climate change on Young LGBT+ communities;
- C. Encourage branch and regional groups and caucuses to consider action on climate change.

Emergency Motions

1. Young Worker's role in Greening Public Services post COP26

Carried

Conference notes that in the wake of the final session of COP26 on Nov 12th which occurred after the closing date for motions to this conference, our world still faces a challenge bigger than anything we have ever encountered before.

Conference notes that the watered-down deal made at COP26 does not go far enough and it is the most vulnerable that will be the hardest hit, with 150 million people forced to migrate because of climate change unless urgent action is taken.

Conference notes the importance of climate change as a trade union issue and notes the publication on Nov 8th of UNISON's "Greening Public Services" Report during COP26, which states that:

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- Getting public services across the “net zero line” will require £140bn of funding by 2035
- Public services represent 8% of the UK’s direct greenhouse gas emissions
- The NHS alone represents about 4% of the UK’s emissions

Conference notes the report emphasises the benefits of engaging workers in the workplace and shines a light on the work that can be done by our members as part of establishing a sustainable path to achieve net zero.

Conference notes that over the last few years, we have seen an increase in young people’s engagement on this issue, and in the wake of COP26, it has only gained momentum and empowered young people across the world to coming together to fight the climate crisis.

Therefore, Conference asks:

1. The National Young Members Forum (NYMF) to work to ensure that young people continue to be involved in the conversation around climate action by promoting UNISON’s Green Network to our young members
2. The NYMF to call on the NEC to encourage branches to adopt the environmental officer role and to actively recruit to fill the position
3. The NYMF to call on the NEC to encourage branches to campaign directly with employers to recognise green/environmental reps and give them time for their activities
4. The NYMF to work to produce campaign resources and training to educate our young members about the climate emergency

EM2. Domestic Abuse – a trade union and workplace issue

Carried

Conference notes that Domestic Abuse is a workplace issue – with 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men reporting domestic abuse at some point in their lifetime.

Conference notes domestic abuse is estimated to cost workplaces national £1.9 billion per year.

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Conference notes that domestic abuse can have a highly negative impact on a workplace, with 9 out of 10 workers who experienced abuse reporting it had a detrimental impact on their performance at work.

Conference notes almost half of workers reporting abuse have had to take time off and 47% of employees reporting abuse state that they have been stalked or abused in the workplace.

Conference notes a sharp increase in reported cases of domestic abuse since the beginning of the COVID19 pandemic, with Women's Aid stating that 67.4% of abuse victims have reported that their situation has got worse since the pandemic.

Conference notes Office for National Statistics data that shows the prevalence of domestic abuse is highest among women aged 16-24.

Conference notes Scottish Crime statistics released in August 2021 showed a 10% increase in Domestic Abuse reports from August 2020.

Conference notes that homeworking is now a much bigger part of working life, that home and the workplace cannot be as easily separated in domestic abuse situations and given that going to work might well be the only opportunity that those suffering domestic abuse have to get away from their abuser, it's a significant factor to consider when negotiating home working policies.

Conference notes that the new Domestic Abuse Act passed in April 2021, recognises that employers have a duty of care towards those suffering domestic abuse and trade unions can play an important role in ensuring this duty of care is upheld.

Conference notes that statutory guidance in support of the Domestic Abuse Act was published on Oct 19th – after the deadline for motions to this conference – which recommends that employers should develop policies that set out their approach to domestic abuse.

Conference notes that the unions work is not done, and young members can play a role in campaigning around the issue and in helping to develop these workplace policies.

Therefore, Conference asks that:

1. The National Young Members Forum (NYMF) campaigns to raise awareness nationally of the new Domestic Abuse Act, the statutory guidance for workplaces, and the help available to young people in the workplace
2. The NYMF calls on the NEC to encourage branches to actively engage employers in ensuring domestic abuse policies are fit for purpose and follow the new statutory guidance

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3. The NYMF calls on the NEC to encourage branches to educate their officers and stewards on domestic violence and abuse and how they can use the polices to help members

4. The NYMF calls on the NEC to ensure branches are factoring domestic violence and abuse when negotiating new home working policies